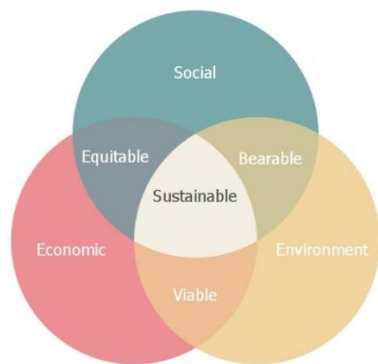


Middletown is *SUSTAINABLE*

Where are we?

The contemporary idea of “sustainability” arose from a growing international awareness of the damage created by narrow-gauge thinking that prioritized short-term gains over long-term costs. Sustainability, as it is now understood and used, encompasses numerous concepts simultaneously. It focuses on meeting the needs of the present, ***without sacrificing the ability of future generations to also meet their needs***. The key to envisioning a sustainable Middletown engages the “triple bottom line” of economy, environment, and equity, or “profits, planet, and people.” In other words, goals established, and tasks undertaken in the City must satisfy the need to advance Middletown’s economic growth while safeguarding or improving the natural environment and creating a more inclusive and equitable society.



(source: ConceptDraw.com)

This cross-cutting concept should impact the widest range of decisions made by the City and its key partners, including elements of land use, transportation, housing, economic development, open space, farmland, infrastructure, and management of waterways, floodplains, forests, and other natural resources. The idea truly emphasizes the **AND** aspect of “Plan of Conservation **and** Development.”

The 2010 Plan of Conservation and Development focused a great deal on energy conservation and reduction in greenhouse gas emissions to combat climate change, as well as other “green” concepts as reduction in vehicle miles traveled. The prologue of that Plan included the policy guidance:

“The Plan of Conservation and Development determines where and to what extent future growth will occur. By developing plans and regulations which contain growth within the area of existing infrastructure, reduce vehicle miles traveled and preserve land as open space, the Planning and Zoning Commission can ensure that Middletown is encouraging responsible and sustainable development and doing its part to address global warming.” (2010 PoCD, p.5)

This policy statement provides bold guidance to the Planning & Zoning Commission on a broad scale. It concentrates on the relatively narrow view of sustainability specifically related most closely to the environment. The goals and policy recommendations suggested in the prior City Plan retain a great deal of merit, but also need to be expanded to include the more inclusive view of sustainability, particularly as the recommendations interact with social equity considerations.

Fortunately, the City has spent the last several years beginning to embrace this philosophical approach, largely through the actions of volunteer citizens, students at Wesleyan, and focused committees.

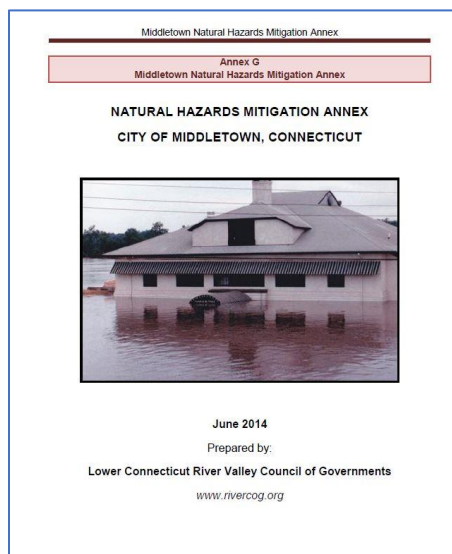
Specifically, Wesleyan University has committed to complete carbon neutrality by 2050. To ensure they reach this goal they have developed a five-year Sustainability Action Plan. The University tracks their sustainability efforts using the STARS (Sustainability, Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System) which is a product developed to help higher education institutions make advancements in sustainability. With such a large stakeholder in Middletown's future already committed to making this change it would serve Middletown well to work to align the goals of the City with the goals. The City should also work with Wesleyan as they implement many of the goals contained within their plan. Not only can the City learn from what Wesleyan has already succeeded with but these projects can serve as demonstrations for what could work elsewhere in the City.

Middletown has been one of the earliest and most enthusiastic communities to embrace the Sustainable CT program. In 2016, The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and the Institute for Sustainable Energy at Eastern Connecticut State University inaugurated a program designed to guide municipalities on a series of coordinated, voluntary actions to become more sustainable. Working with numerous subject-matter experts, a framework of actions across a number of categories was defined and established. A certification program was rolled out in 2017, designed to be locally led by committees of volunteers and municipal staff. Middletown's efforts were initially led by the City's Clean Energy Task Force, but quickly included a broad coalition of volunteers. The City achieved "Bronze" certification status in 2018 through the undertaking of several efforts and documenting existing community initiatives and policies. In 2019, additional work yielded one of the state's first "Silver" municipal certifications, and the Task Force seems committed to continual improvement of that status and the work that supports it.

In addition to spearheading the City's involvement with the Sustainable CT process, the Clean Energy Task Force also developed an "Energy Plan" for Middletown, adopted in the summer of 2019, which was intended to be incorporated into this update of the Plan of Conservation & Development. The goal of this Energy Plan is to help "Guide the city toward greater energy efficiency and sustainability," and notes that the recommendations will yield multiple benefits, including energy cost savings, increased public health via air quality, improving interior comfort through energy efficiency, and a more resilient power grid. Beginning with a bold aspiration of transitioning the entire community of Middletown to 100% renewable energy by 2050, the key elements the Plan lays out include: 1) Reduce energy usage by improving the efficiency of our buildings, both public and private; 2) Strategically electrify by transitioning transportation to electric vehicles and heating and cooling to high-efficiency heat pumps; and 3) Develop an optimal mix of locally-supplied renewable energy by promoting the responsible development of solar energy including residential rooftop solar, community shared solar, commercial solar, and solar carports. This plan includes numerous specific steps to be undertaken by the City and its institutional partners, as well as benchmarking and tracking approaches for the municipal, transportation, and private sectors.



The City of Middletown is due for an update to its Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan (NHMP). The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires each municipality to update their NHMP every five years to retain eligibility for certain pre-disaster mitigations funds and a higher prioritization for additional recovery funding. Middletown's NHMP was incorporated as an annex to the regional RiverCOG Plan in June 2014. The Middletown annex to the regional NHMP provided an analysis of the most significant likely hazards, including flooding from the Connecticut River and its tributaries, tropical storms and nor'easters, as well as winter snow and ice storms. It also provided context and risk assessment for other natural hazards such as earthquake, tornadoes, wildfire, and wind shears. A variety of policy and mitigation recommendations were assessed to both prevent high-value losses as well as respond to disasters when they are occurring. Numerous policies had already been put into place, including emergency management communications systems and the prohibition of new construction in any identified flood-prone areas. The analysis and recommendations are generally still valid, and the City has not experienced any major natural hazard events in the half-decade since its 2014 adoption. The City will be working with the RiverCOG to update its portion of the regional NHMP over the next year to ensure continued eligibility for FEMA programs as well as to integrate any revisions to flood maps and updates to sea-level rise projections. [\[maybe link to NHMP? http://www.rivercog.org/naturalhazardmitigation.html\]](http://www.rivercog.org/naturalhazardmitigation.html)



What are people saying?

As evidenced by the establishment and success of the Middletown “Sustainable CT” Committee in achieving one of the state’s first “Silver” certifications, the interest and commitment to the concept of sustainability has taken root within the community. Participants in the numerous public outreach efforts surrounding the development of this Plan echoed a strong interest in promoting sustainable approaches and practices.

At a July, 2019 listening session focused on sustainability and infrastructure, residents strongly encouraged the City to show leadership on this issue. Specific suggestions included having the City take a formal stand on combatting climate change, committing to energy and water use reductions, pledging to use 100% renewable energy sources by 2050, adopt a more “European model” of waste management including recycling, and establish a more active street and parks cleanup program. This leadership might also involve promoting sustainability outward into the private sector through initiatives like providing tax or other financial incentives for homeowners to use renewable energy or water use reduction, require new development or significant redevelopment projects to be “green” or more energy efficient, and making more public land available for gardening or production agriculture.

From the social equity aspects of sustainability, public input ranged across several topics. The idea of lowering barriers to access and democratizing mobility was seen in comments encouraging a more bikeable and walkable City with reliable public transit. Focusing on each of these elements would also reduce vehicle emissions and encourage healthier residents. Several members of the public advocated for social service networks to address; public health, homelessness, affordable housing, nutrition education, youth and family support, and mental health services as a priority by the City. This could be accomplished through a combination of direct municipal program support and broader engagement with nonprofit and community partners.

Wesleyan University undertook a student-led project to engage with the City’s planning process during the course of this Plan update. One of their work groups specifically focused on recommendations that would integrate concepts of sustainability into the municipal Plan of Conservation & Development. The recommendations are extensive, and the framework the analysis establishes would be very useful to the City’s process. In each of the many subject areas, including land use, transportation, housing, economic development, open space, infrastructure, flood plain and natural resource management, several cross-cutting goals are established. These include:

- Reducing dependence on fossil fuels, extracted underground metals, minerals, chemicals, and synthetic substances;
- Reducing activities that negatively impact nature;
- Meeting human needs fairly and efficiently; and
- Promoting activities that have multiple benefits to the community

One of the most-repeated themes in the public engagement sessions was the need to remove barriers to public involvement so that a much broader cross-section of residents could become more active in local leadership. An active recruitment and outreach campaign to incorporate more diverse voices into decision making would encourage a higher awareness of equity concerns.

What are the Big Ideas?

City efforts toward sustainability should be a model for businesses and residents

The framework established by Sustainable CT does an excellent job in breaking down the concepts of sustainability into a municipal context and categories for which practical local action may be taken. Because of the thoughtful and reasonable approach created by this program, communities such as Middletown are able to understand and undertake a concerted effort toward a more resilient and sustainable municipality. The enthusiasm and success that Middletown volunteers and staff have shown in embracing this program – being one of the first communities in Connecticut to achieve a “Silver” certification status – should be embraced and built upon. Middletown should focus its effort on showing leadership within the City and across the State in positive action on sustainability. This leadership should be reflected in both internal policies and external expectations.

From an internal standpoint, the City should increase its support for the work on Sustainable CT policies and practices, embracing the framework and the community energy it has unleashed. A City-wide decision-making rubric may be adopted that filters key policy and activity analysis into the “triple bottom line” of making positive contributions to environmental quality, economic development, and social equity. When determining municipal activities and priorities, project planning can include considerations of how reductions may be made to fossil fuels and disturbance of the natural environment, while increases may be made to human needs and other equitable community benefits. Elements most directly within the City’s control can be the most immediately impactful, including sidewalks, bike lanes, transit accessibility and other mobility improvements, policies committing the City to reducing fossil-fuel based energy usage, ramping up efforts on waste reduction, recycling, and cleanup of municipal assets. Efforts can be expanded to both acquire and protect new open spaces, as well as maintaining a robust stewardship policy for the City’s existing parks, open spaces, street trees, and public ways. Making strong policy declarations toward the City’s role in combatting climate change and setting sustainability benchmarks can help raise the City’s profile as a leader, and then leaning into the local practices that carry out these policies will respect and deliver upon the promises of Sustainable CT.

From an external standpoint, the City can also seek to make positive change toward sustainability among private property owners, businesses, and other key institutions. Zoning and other development regulations can be adjusted to create a combination of required improvements for new development and incentives for sustainable practices. New developments should be required to include accessibility and mobility elements to ensure equity of access and may be rewarded with streamlined processes or density bonuses for “green” building practices, use of renewable energy, resource or waste reductions, and restoration of natural environments. Increased restrictions and prohibitions can be implemented to prevent new development into existing or projected high flood-hazard areas. Separately, the City could pursue a program of tax incentives to encourage businesses and property owners to undertake sustainable practices such as roof-mounted solar installations, renewable micro-grid networks or the redevelopment of grey-field and brownfield properties in lieu of greenfield development. In specific, the Plan of Conservation & Development should adopt the recommendations of the 2019 Middletown Energy Plan as a supplement and pursue the major goal of 100% renewable energy in the City by 2050.

The menu of actions provided by Sustainable CT and the growing database of innovative municipal practices surrounding innovation continues to grow. The City should continue to support the community’s efforts in improving its certification status and should integrate a re-oriented municipal

decision-making approach to ensure that sustainability considerations are at the center of its philosophy of government.

Infrastructure investment should reflect a commitment to resilience and a changing climate

Middletown's centuries-old relationship with the Connecticut River has seen scores of flood events, ranging from short-term inconveniences to the occasional disaster. Longer-term development patterns, the topography of Maromas, and active municipal policies restraining construction in flood-prone areas have been successful in limiting the most severe of impacts from visiting the City. Despite that, proof continues to amass that the global climate is changing, and effects will be seen everywhere. In Connecticut, some of the most obvious impacts over the coming decades are likely to involve sea-level rise along the shoreline and associated storm-surge concerns during major weather events. UConn's Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA) published projections in early 2019 about likely shoreline effects, which include a range of between 2-4' baseline increase in sea level by 2100.

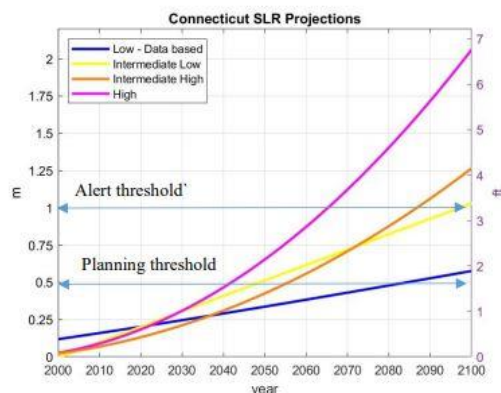


Figure XX: CIRCA Sea-level rise projections, 2019

While CIRCA's mapping shows that much of the immediate impact of sea-level rise will be felt primarily by coastal communities, Middletown will also be affected. As the Connecticut River is tidal to Middletown, storm surge is very likely to create more severe flooding in these areas. In addition, a higher-energy water cycle created by a warming atmosphere has led to the acceleration of storm frequency. Communities across the country have seen numerous 100-year flood events over the past decade, and this trend shows no signs of slowing. Middletown's Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan confirmed that the most likely climate-related hazards for the projectable future are related to flooding. It is anticipated that the updated NHMP work, which will be undertaken between 2020-2021, will provide updated information about key areas at risk, including any critical municipal facilities.

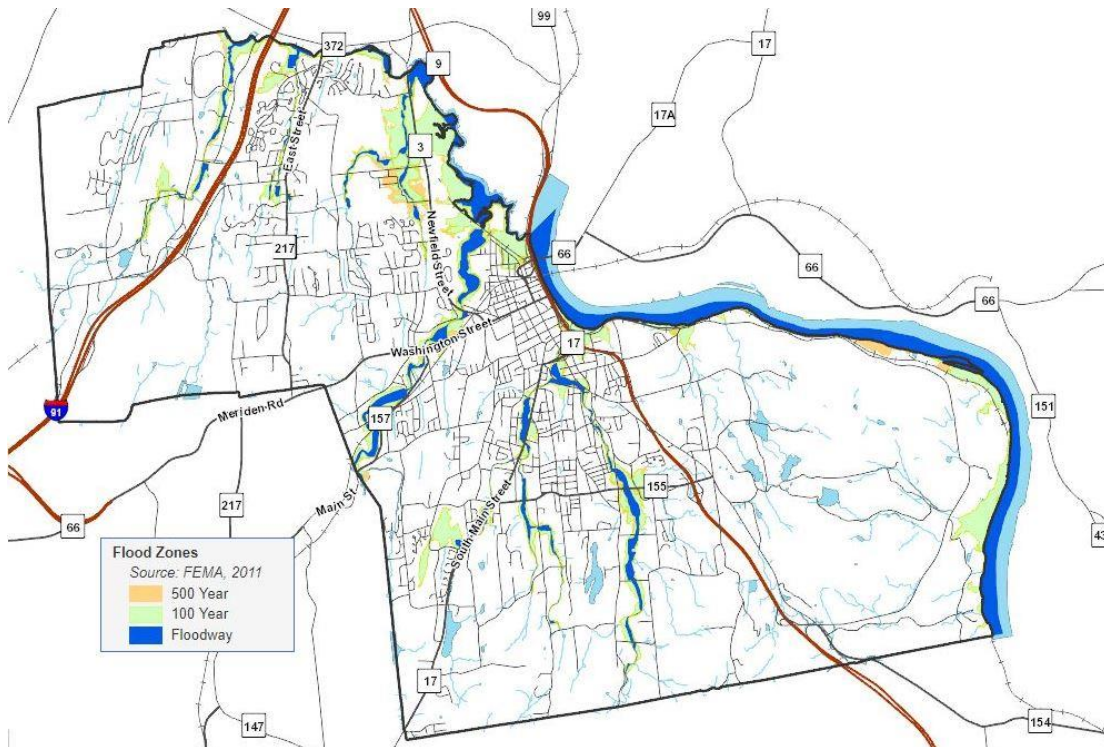


Fig. XX: FEMA-designated flood zone areas

The approach to municipal resilience planning is to not make major investment or place critical infrastructure within high-risk areas. For the most part, Middletown has made the appropriate long-term decisions relative to its significant infrastructure. Key facilities (hospitals, shelters, power plants, emergency management) are located outside flood-prone areas, and the City recently completed a relocation of its primary wastewater treatment plant to a more secure location upstream of the former River Road facility. Local ordinances and zoning regulations prevent or significantly limit new development in flood zones or ensure that all habitable square footage is above, minimally, the 100-year base flood elevation. All of these policies and regulatory approaches should continue and adapt to the most current authoritative information on storm projections.

The City is also focusing on limiting the expansion of infrastructure, particularly that of public sewer and water lines, beyond the existing service areas. This policy will assist in the focusing of resources and growth into a geography which can be reasonably managed, and efforts may then concentrate on system inter-connectivity, upgrades, and efficiencies. This overall approach moves the City closer to sustainability, as it provides for the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of the Middletown of the future to thrive.

Growing in place and focusing on redevelopment

Sustainability may be distinguished from other environmentally-linked buzz words (“green,” “resilient,” “eco-friendly”) by its strong focus on economic vitality. Very frequently, broad recommendations about

environmental policies to be enacted at a city-wide, or even individual-resident level are made without sensitivity to the effect of those actions on either the ability of the entity to pay for it, or the opportunity cost in terms of future growth or other choices. Sustainability includes, at its very core, the idea that actions must promote, or at least must not prevent, economic growth. From a land-use development standpoint, sustainability then equates to growing in place. Gone are the decades where sprawling development is enabled and encouraged by an automotive-centric disregard for consequence. Gone, thankfully, are the days when the average worker sought to put as much distance between their job and their home as was feasible.

Enhancing, growing, and intensifying activity in areas that are already built and established are appealing concepts both from the direction of our demographics and the overall concept of sustainability. Middletown's network of roads, sewer and water lines, data infrastructure, and established neighborhoods are mature and relatively compact. The City should continue to align its policies to encourage that economic and community growth is focused in these areas. This will require a combination of carrots and sticks that allow for higher density residential and commercial development within the current sewer and water service area, focused on the Downtown, the City's Opportunity Zones, and key business nodes. Carrots, or incentives, would include relaxed zoning regulations for redevelopment, funding for re-use and redevelopment of brownfield and greyfield properties, and coordination with key anchor institutions on focusing investment into the Middletown core. Corresponding sticks, or disincentives would include density reductions and increased regulatory scrutiny of greenfield development away from core areas of the City. Investments in protection of open spaces, active farmland, and large forest blocks would accordingly be focused on those lower-density and undeveloped areas of the City.

An innovative approach to accomplish both conservation and development goals within the same market may be found in creating a transfer of development rights (TDR) program. A TDR program, managed by the City, would establish regulatory "sending" and "receiving" areas of the City, and would seek to conserve land by redirecting development to more suitable areas. Property owners and developers in receiving areas would pay property owners in sending areas for development credits. These credits would allow increased density of development (via floor-area ratio, building heights, unit densities, etc.). The funds would compensate the sending area owners for the preservation of their land and corresponding forfeiture of the ability to develop. This approach allows the City to manage a market solution to sustainably and simultaneously accomplish focused development and targeted conservation. TDR programs have been demonstrated successfully in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, but have not yet been broadly attempted in Connecticut. The size and growth patterns of Middletown – which has clearly established areas for both growth and preservation make this type of program something worth looking at more closely..

Increased commitment to social equity in growth decisions to meet current and future human needs

As of 2018, approximately 22% of Middletown's 21,000+ housing units were deemed by the State of Connecticut to be "affordable," which included residences receiving government assistance, tenant rental assistance, mortgage support, or holding deed restrictions. While this percentage places Middletown within the top ten among Connecticut municipalities and provides for an exemption from the Affordable Housing Appeals Act (CGS §8-30g), it does not mean that Middletown has satisfied its

responsibilities on housing. As noted in the review of the City's demographic trends, nearly 20% of homeowners with a mortgage (owner-occupied units) and 12% of homeowners without a mortgage were cost burdened. On the rental side, 36% of the City's renters were cost burdened, spending more than 35% of their total income on housing costs. While Connecticut is an expensive place to live, and generally these rates were somewhat lower than overall State number, these numbers reflect the lack of housing choice at appropriate price points in Middletown.

While providing deed-restricted and income-limited developments allows for the longest-term guarantee of affordability, the construction of these restricted units tends to occur subject to the availability of Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC). These cannot be reliably counted upon in uncertain political and fiscal climates. In other markets around Connecticut, for-profit developers can use the provisions of CGS §8-30g to set aside 30% of the new housing units as affordable and recoup the construction losses through the 70% unrestricted inventory. Because Middletown does not have the highest housing demand in the State nor is it subject to the Affordable Housing Appeals act, this type of development approach is also unreliable as a method for increasing Middletown's affordable inventory. While still encouraging developers and nonprofit housing groups to pursue LIHTC-funded projects, the City should focus on the elements of housing development within its control, which include zoning regulations and property tax incentives.

Zoning regulations should be reviewed and amended to increase allowable residential densities in targeted areas – particularly those within the urban core of Middletown including the downtown area and Opportunity Zone tracts – where existing infrastructure is available to support new housing. These changes could include density bonuses for redevelopment of brownfields, potentially increasing maximum heights, and parking requirement reductions, all of which would have the effect of reducing per-unit costs to developers and ultimately to residents. These regulatory incentives should certainly be accompanied by appropriate design requirements and provision of, or connection to public amenities. Tax incentives, including a five- or ten-year ramp up of local property taxes, could also improve the pro forma calculations for developers and make projects more viable in Middletown. Further, City staff should be assigned to support an active effort to encourage and assemble housing development projects as targets for investors in the City's Opportunity Zones.

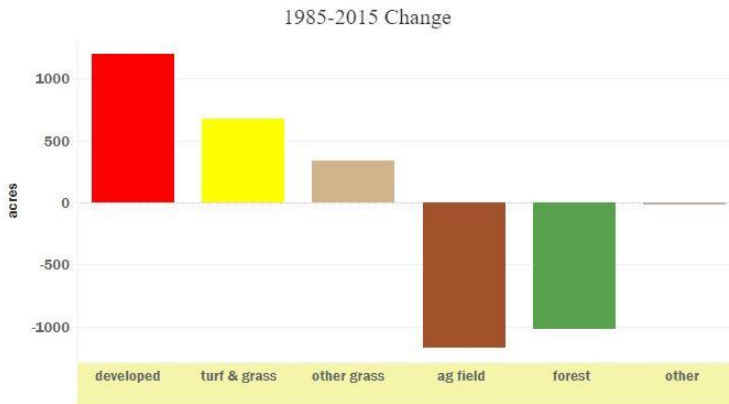
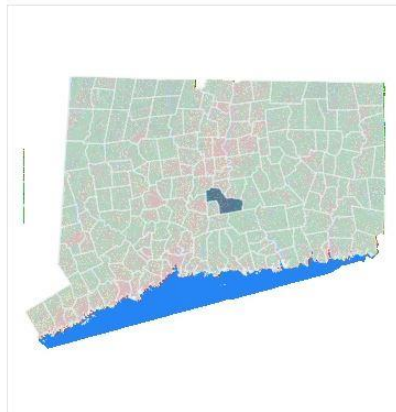
For existing housing stock, relatively inexpensive housing options are also frequently those that are most in need of maintenance, upgraded systems or structures, and seeing signs of aging. As reported by the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) of the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 62.2% of the Middletown housing stock had been built prior to 1980, with over a third of that (21.1% overall) built before 1950. This statistic, combined with the fact (from the ACS) that over 45% of Middletown's housing is renter-occupied can lead to the condition that a significant portion of housing is maintained by landlords, who have a financial interest in keeping down expenses at properties. Without casting unwarranted aspersions at the rental-housing stock in Middletown, the City should be active and vigilant in ensuring that basic housing standards are maintained, and its residents are able to live in healthy, pleasant, and safe conditions regardless of ownership or income.

Beyond housing availability and affordability, the City should seek to connect all of its residents, and particularly those who have been historically marginalized, with resources and opportunity. From a development perspective, this means that neighborhood-scale resources like grocery stores, banks, religious institutions, libraries, and social services should be available within easy walk or transit from all

parts of Middletown. Accomplishing this goal will require consideration of zoning changes to allow for smaller-scale business uses in higher-density residential neighborhoods, ensuring complete pedestrian networks, and coordination with Middletown Area Transit to review its routes with those targets in mind. In making these and many other policy changes, the City should actively ramp up its outreach efforts to engage a more fully representative cross-section of residents. More voices in decision-making are needed to ensure the City's sustainable success, particularly when those voices come from the residents who are most affected by the results of these decisions.

Preservation, access, and stewardship of critical lands are key to Middletown's environment and cultural identity

Over a 30-year time horizon between 1985 and 2015, the UConn Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) assessed the changing landscape in Connecticut's communities. Using land cover as a basis of analysis, CLEAR estimated that Middletown converted approximately 2,200 acres (3.4 square miles) from farm and forestland to residential and commercial development, which includes associated development like new roads. Despite that change, and the substantial portions of Middletown that were already developed prior to 1985, the City still retained extraordinary natural resources. As of 2015, over 12,000 acres (18.75 square miles) in Middletown were classified as "forest" and an additional 2,200 as "agricultural fields." The rate of loss demonstrated by that study – over 70 acres converted per year from farm/forest to development land – is not sustainable. The implications of land conversion of this type extend from issues of habitat loss for flora and fauna to stormwater ramifications of increased impervious surfaces, and from the loss of carbon-sequestering value of trees to the loss of local food production capacity.



1985 and 2015 Area (acres)

| Town | develop.. | turf & g.. | other gr.. | ag field | forest | other |
|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|----------|--------|-------|
| Mansfield | 3,242 | 2,036 | 102 | 3,318 | 20,012 | 1,162 |
| Marlboro.. | 1,723 | 283 | 140 | 815 | 12,153 | 219 |
| Meriden | 2,066 | 543 | 141 | 437 | 11,637 | 210 |
| Middlebury | 6,131 | 2,583 | 268 | 875 | 4,952 | 517 |
| Middlefield | 1,005 | 836 | 148 | 2,145 | 3,027 | 440 |
| Middletown | 5,722 | 2,711 | 498 | 3,379 | 13,296 | 1,566 |
| Milford | 7,600 | 1,856 | 317 | 91 | 2,720 | 2,112 |
| Monroe | 2,789 | 1,657 | 286 | 587 | 11,120 | 383 |
| Montville | 4,507 | 1,760 | 882 | 719 | 18,441 | 2,027 |
| Morris | 1,054 | 760 | 214 | 2,009 | 6,818 | 1,107 |

1985-2015 Change (acres)

| Town | develop.. | turf & g.. | other gr.. | ag field | forest | other |
|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|----------|--------|-------|
| Madison | 809 | 478 | -119 | -138 | -995 | -35 |
| Manchest.. | 1,783 | 177 | -187 | -352 | -1,374 | -47 |
| Mansfield | 922 | 465 | 85 | -225 | -1,222 | -24 |
| Marlboro.. | 343 | 260 | 0 | -78 | -516 | -8 |
| Meriden | 716 | 53 | -27 | -200 | -584 | 43 |
| Middlebury | 403 | 135 | 6 | -172 | -364 | -9 |
| Middlefield | 157 | 388 | 71 | -542 | -69 | -5 |
| Middletown | 1,196 | 672 | 340 | -1,170 | -1,023 | -14 |
| Milford | 710 | 108 | -106 | -73 | -591 | -48 |
| Monroe | 1,216 | 547 | -54 | -231 | -1,411 | -67 |
| Montville | 1,141 | 564 | 328 | -88 | -1,909 | -36 |
| Morris | 107 | 436 | 84 | -143 | -107 | 26 |

Forest includes coniferous forest, deciduous forest, forested wetland and utility right-of-way. Other includes water, non-forested wetlands, tidal wetlands and barren.

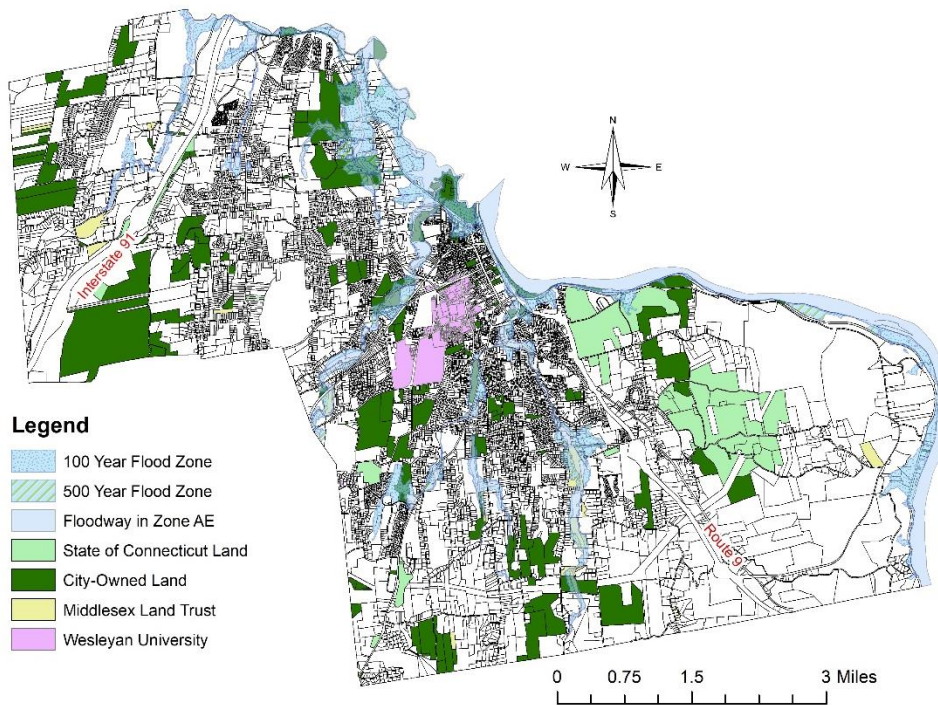
In the bottom table, the top number is the 1985 acres and the bottom number is the 2015 acres.

Source: UConn CLEAR (clear.uconn.edu)

While the City of Middletown, State of Connecticut, land trusts, and other conservation interests own and work to ensure the preservation of thousands of acres from development, the largest portions of the remaining farm and forest land have no permanent protections in place. The fact of their continued use as forest, farm, and other open spaces may be attributed to some combination of lack of market demand for development, zoning regulations, owner goodwill, and institutional planning. Even some of the land owned by units of government – the Connecticut Valley Hospital property, for instance – cannot be considered as permanently preserved.

Recognizing that the City needs to be more active in protecting these open lands and critical resources, the voters approved, in 2019, a \$5 million bond for open space acquisition. The City, led by the Planning & Zoning Commission, the Commission on Conservation & Agriculture, and the Open Space Committee, should work together to develop an approach to identifying and prioritizing acquisitions. Employing a sustainability framework, the City should prioritize property that can serve multiple purposes, such as protecting key natural habitats, expanding or linking together existing open space or trail systems, preserving large forest blocks or prime farm soils, or providing recreational opportunities in currently underserved neighborhoods. Other factors, such as important open properties at risk of development, properties with conservation-minded owners willing to sell property at a discount, and land that is also targeted by Land Trust or other non-governmental partners, should also enter the City's consideration. In particular, if the State of Connecticut, Pratt & Whitney, or other larger property owners of land in the Maromas area are seen as willing to discuss sale and protection of land, the City should take note. A GIS-based multi-factor analysis can be employed to target properties.

City of Middletown: Flood Zones and Property Owned by City, State or Institutions



Finding more opportunities for high-quality property acquisition beyond what is supported by currently available funding should act as encouragement to seek additional funding, both through future bond referenda and application to the State's Open Space and Watershed Lands Grant program. Private landowners should be further encouraged to work with the Middlesex Land Trust and other conservation organizations on potential preservation projects. Owners of prime farmland may work with the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program, which funds the acquisition of development rights on farms to allow continued production while protecting the soil resources. Over a shorter time horizon, the City should examine its use-assessment policies enabled by the PA-490 tax abatement program to ensure that property owners with large but unprotected land holdings are encouraged to maintain their undeveloped status.

[TO ADD: Priority acquisition map or priority trails map?]

Acquisition and protection of property, while a critical goal for the City, represents only the first step toward a sustainability strategy. Stewardship of the City's existing properties, as well as those of the State and private institutions, must be given priority and resources. Proper attention must be given to the ongoing maintenance of properties, including basic forestry management, removal of invasive species and provision of safe and convenient public access. Property staffing and budgeting of Public Works and Recreation Departments, as well as strong partnerships with Land Trusts and other conservation organizations such as Connecticut Forest & Parks, will ensure stewardship remains a priority. The City can also continue to ensure active conservation and cultivation of its natural resources through private entities. The successful example of Forest City Farms, an organic, community-supported

agricultural operation operating on City property, shows that public-private partnerships can result in sustainable approaches that satisfy the “triple bottom line” of environment, equity, and economy.

What Should We Do?

- 1) Formally adopt the goal of committing Middletown to conversion of energy use to 100% renewable by 2050, and endorse the recommendations and strategies of the 2019 Middletown Energy Plan;
- 2) Support the work of the Clean Energy Task Force in their “Sustainable CT” project work and seek “Gold” Certification status;
- 3) Promote, through incentives and regulations, the increased usage of renewable energy technologies in public buildings and new developments;
- 4) Support development of renewable-energy micro-grids;
- 5) Update Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan and increase regulations to discourage new construction in high hazard areas;
- 6) Ensure that key facilities and public safety infrastructure are resilient and prepared for projected increases in storm intensity and frequency;
- 7) Adopt a “sustainability” framework for municipal decision-making to ensure that municipal investments and policies promote social equity, environmental stewardship, and economic growth;
- 8) Increase outreach efforts to underserved areas of Middletown to solicit participation in community decision-making;
- 9) Focus infrastructure investment on maintaining and upgrading service in areas of existing facilities;
- 10) Prioritize funding of sidewalk/bicycle facility upgrades in core development areas and implementation of “Complete Streets” goals;
- 11) Review Zoning Regulations to ensure that they reflect a prioritization of development in downtown areas, existing higher-density neighborhoods, and key commercial nodes;
- 12) Consider a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) framework that would increase density in core development areas and incentivize preservation of lower-density areas;
- 13) Consider increasing maximum residential densities in downtown and Opportunity Zone areas, in conjunction with design-based and public-amenity requirements for new developments;
- 14) Vigilantly maintain safe and healthy housing standards through enforcement and incentives;
- 15) Work with Middletown Area Transit to ensure that public transportation routes are responsive to changing demands;
- 16) Work in partnership to develop a targeted list of priority lands for acquisition that satisfies a sustainability framework;
- 17) Leverage City funding through partnership with State of Connecticut, Middlesex Land Trust, and other conservation organizations on cooperative acquisitions;
- 18) Prioritize the funding of property stewardship for open space and recreation lands;
- 19) Make open City lands, particularly those with agricultural soils, available to private farm operations;
- 20) Consider future open space land acquisition bonds